

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 075780

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ORIGIN SS-25

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

INFO AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

S E C R E T STATE 075780

EXDIS

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, KU, IR, US, SA

SUBJECT: KUWAIT REQUEST FOR AIR COVER

REF: TEHRAN 2475; AMMAN 1972

1. IN RESPONSE TO FARTASH REQUEST PARA 3 TEHRAN REFTTEL, YOU MAY SAY THAT TO OUR KNOWLEDGE CLOSEST SAUDI BASES ARE AT RIYADH AND DHAHRAN. FURTHER DETAILS ABOUT SAUDI AIRCRAFT CAPABILITIES AND AVAILABILITIES TO SUPPORT KUWAIT SHOULD BE SOUGHT BY IRAN DIRECTLY FROM SAUDIS. YOU MAY ADD THAT, WHILE USG CANNOT SPEAK FOR SAUDIS ON THIS QUESTION, OUR IMPRESSION IS THAT CURRENT SAUDI PREOCCUPATION WITH POTENTIAL THREAT ALONG ITS SOUTHERN BORDER MAKES IT QUESTIONABLE WHETHER SAUDIS CAN OR WILL EARMARK AIRCRAFT FOR CONTINGENCY USE IN KUWAIT.

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 STATE 075780

2. IN PROVIDING THIS INFORMATION IT WOULD BE USEFUL IF YOU COULD AGAIN ENCOURAGE DIRECT EXCHANGE ON SUCH MATTERS BETWEEN IRAN AND SAUDI ARABIA. OUR POLICY TO ENCOURAGE IRANISANS AND SAUDIS TO ASSUME PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY FOR REGIONAL SECURITY (STATE 80182) CAN BEST BE SERVED IF CONTINGENCY PLANNING FOR SUCH MATTERS AS EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE TO KUWAIT CAN BE WORKED OUT DIRECTLY BETWEEN RIYADH AND TEHRAN (AND, AS APPROPRIATE, AMMAN). WHILE WE REMAIN READY TO HELP REGIONAL COUNTRIES DEVELOP THEIR OWN CAPABILITIES AND WOULD HOPE TO BE KEPT INFORMED OF DEVELOP-

MENTS (PARTICULARLY WHERE UTILIZATION OR TRANSFERS OF US- ORIGIN ARMS MAY BE INVOLVED), WE BELIEVE OUR PLAYING ROLE OF MIDDLEMAN IN COORDINATING PLANNING OR EXCHANGING SUCH INFORMATION AS THAT REQUESTED BY FARTASH WOULD HINDER DEVELOPMENT OF DIRECT COMMUNICATION ESSENTIAL TO EFFECTIVE REGIONAL COORDINATION.

3. WE DO, OF COURSE, WELCOME INTEREST IN MAINTAINING CLOSE BILATERAL COORDINATION WITH OUR FRIENDS IN AREA, WHICH WE ASSUME SHAH' S REPORTED DESIRE TO CONSULT WITH US ON KUWAIT SITUATION (AMMAN REFTEL) REPRESENTS. IN EXPECTATION SHAH MAY RAISE SUBJECT WITH DEPSEC DURING AUDIENCE, APRIL 22, WE ARE PREPARING TALKING POINTS WHICH WILL BE CABLED TEHRAN ASAP FOR CONSIDERATION.

4. FOR JIDDA: WE ARE IMPRESSED WITH GENERAL APPROACH RECOMMENDED BY AMBASSADOR IN JIDDA 1618. ASSUME THAT YOU WILL ALSO HAVE OPPORTUNITY DISCUSS THIS APPROACH WITH AMBASSADORS HELMS, STOLTZFUS, AND CRAWFORD DURING TEHRAN COM CONFERENCE. WE TOO DO NOT UNDERESTIMATE PROBLEMS INVOLVED IN ESTABLISHING CLOSER RELATIONS BETWEEN SAUDI ARABIA AND IRAN, GIVEN PERSONALITIES INVOLVED, HISTORIC ARAB- PERSIAN, SUNNI- SHIA CLEAVAGES, AND POLITICAL FACTORS SUCH AS IRAQI (AND OTHER ARAB RADICALS) LIKELY REACTION TO OVERT SIGNS OF SAUDI - IRANIAN COOPERATION AND LINGERING SAUDI MISTRUST OF LONG- TERM IRANIAN INTENTIONS IN GULF. WE THINK, HOWEVER, THAT IF SOME PROGRESS CAN BE MADE IN GETTING MEANINGFUL DIALOGUE STARTED AT LEVEL JUST BELOW TWO MONARCHS (WITH, OF COURSE, THEIR ACQUIESCENCE AND HOPEFULLY THEIR BLESSING) THIS WOULD BE GOOD START IN RIGHT DIRECTION.

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 STATE 075780

5. ONE POSSIBLE DRAWBACK TO SCENARIO OUTLINED PARA 3
JIDDA 1618 IS THAT IT SEEMS LEAVE IT TO IRANIANS TO TAKE
ALL OF THE INITIATIVES (E. G., THAT IRANIAN AMBASSADOR
WOULD TALK TO SULTAN AND THEN IRANIAN GENERAL WOULD COME
TO SAUDI ARABIA). THIS MIGHT NOT BE ACCEPTABLE TO
IRANIANS. SUGGEST THEREFORE YOU MAY ALSO WISH CONSIDER
ALTERNATIVE SCENARIO THAT WOULD INVOLVE POSSIBLE SAUDI
VISITOR TO IRAN. ONE POSSIBLE APPROACH THAT OCCURS TO US
IS FOR GENERAL KABBANI, FOLLOWING HIS VISIT TO YEMEN AND
REPORTING BACK TO MODA, TO THEN VISIT TEHRAN (AND POSSI-
BILY AMMAN) TO DISCUSS WITH MILITARY OFFICIALS IN
THOSE CAPITALS WHAT CONTRIBUTION THEY COULD MAKE TO HELP
MEET YEMENI MILITARY AND/ OR ECONOMIC REQUIREMENTS. THIS
MIGHT BE ONE WAY OF EFFECTIVELY BREAKING ICE AND ALSO
GETTING GOOD START ON DISCUSSION OF SPECIFICS FOR HELPING
YAR. PORTER

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